

O 301454Z AUG 91
FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0272
MOSCOW POL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LENINGRAD 04146

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [UR](#)
SUBJECT: LENINGRAD'S COMMUNISTS UNREPENTANT

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: IN A REMARKABLE MONOLOGUE WHICH REFLECTED MORE ABOUT THE CURRENT TORTURED THINKING OF COMMUNIST APPARATCHIKS THAN REALITY, O. L. ZOLOTAREV, AIDE TO LENINGRAD COMMUNIST PARTY FIRST SECRETARY GIDASPOV, ASSERTED AUGUST 28 THAT:

- GIDASPOV HAD NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN THE AUGUST 19-21 COUP, THOUGH HE HAD SERVED ON LENINGRAD'S "EXTRAORDINARY COMMITTEE;"
- GIDASPOV HAD NOT KNOWN WHO HAD FORMED THE COMMITTEE OR WHY HE WAS INVITED TO SERVE;
- THE COMMUNIST PARTY WOULD RISE INEVITABLY AGAIN, ACCORDING TO THE "DIALECTIC;"
- THE CURRENT "TIME OF TROUBLES" COULD ONLY END WITH A CRACKDOWN OR "IRON FIST" WITHIN FIVE YEARS.

ZOLOTAREV ALSO STATED THAT GIDASPOV WOULD VOLUNTARILY COOPERATE WITH THE INVESTIGATION OF THE LENINGRAD PROCURATOR'S OFFICE INTO HIS ACTIVITIES DURING THE COUP, DESPITE THE "ILLEGAL" SEIZURE OF COMMUNIST PARTY HEADQUARTERS BY THE CITY GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

3. LENINGRAD CONOFFS HAD AN IMPROMPTU MEETING AUGUST 28 WITH OLEG LEONARDOVICH ZOLOTAREV, AIDE TO FIRST SECRETARY OF THE LENINGRAD OBKOM OF THE CPSU, BORIS VENIAMINOVICH GIDASPOV. ALONG WITH OTHER LENINGRAD DIPLOMATS, CONOFFS HAD BEEN CALLED TO A "PRESS CONFERENCE" WITH GIDASPOV; THE FIRST SECRETARY FAILED TO APPEAR FOR THE MEETING BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO SUBMIT TO A "VOLUNTARY" INTERROGATION BY THE LENINGRAD PROCURATOR'S OFFICE REGARDING HIS ROLE IN THE AUGUST 19-21 COUP ATTEMPT. INSTEAD, GIDASPOV'S ASSISTANT, ZOLOTAREV, GAVE AN OFF-THE-CUFF BRIEFING ON THE LENINGRAD COMMUNIST PARTY'S CURRENT TRAVAILS -- AND OUTLOOK ON THE FUTURE.

SEIZURE OF SMOLNIY ILLEGAL?

4. ZOLOTAREV BEGAN BY EXPLAINING THAT FIRST SECRETARY GIDASPOV HAD GONE TO THE LENINGRAD PROCURATOR'S OFFICE TUESDAY, AUGUST 27, TO LODGE A FORMAL COMPLAINT ABOUT THE "ILLEGAL" SEIZURE OF THE SMOLNIY INSTITUTE, LENINGRAD'S COMMUNIST PARTY HEADQUARTERS. WHEN SMOLNIY HAD BEEN SEALED SATURDAY, AUGUST 24, ZOLOTAREV COMPLAINED, THE MVD HAD NOT SHOWN ANY PAPERS. NOR HAD THERE BEEN A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PROCURATOR'S OFFICE PRESENT. THE MILITIA HAD CLAIMED THEY WERE ACTING ON A DECREE FROM YEL'TSIN (COMMENT: PRESUMABLY YEL'TSIN'S DECREE OUTLAWING THE COMMUNIST PARTY), ZOLOTAREV EXPLAINED, BUT THEY DID NOT SHOW A COPY OF THE DECREE.

5. RETREATING SOMEWHAT, ZOLOTAREV ADMITTED THAT THE CITY GOVERNMENT PROBABLY ENJOYED THE RIGHT TO REOCCUPY THE SMOLNIY INSTITUTE AS IT WAS "CITY PROPERTY" WHICH THE COMMUNIST PARTY HAD BEEN RENTING. "ANY LANDLORD CAN BREAK A LEASE," HE EXPLAINED. YET THIS RIGHT TO BREAK A LEASE, ZOLOTAREV INSISTED, SHOULD BE EXERCISED ACCORDING TO

DUE PROCESS -- NOT BY UNILATERAL ACTION.

GIDASPOV STILL IMMUNE?

16. APOLOGIZING FOR GIDASPOV'S INABILITY TO RECEIVE THE DIPLOMATS, ZOLOTAREV EXPLAINED THAT A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE PROCURATOR'S OFFICE HAD APPEARED UNEXPECTEDLY THAT MORNING AND REQUESTED TO MEET WITH GIDASPOV. THOUGH GIDASPOV STILL ENJOYED IMMUNITY BY VIRTUE OF HIS STATUS AS A DEPUTY TO THE USSR CONGRESS OF PEOPLE'S DEPUTIES, ZOLOTAREV EXPLAINED, GIDASPOV HAD VOLUNTARILY AGREED TO GIVE AN "EXPLANATION" OF HIS ROLE IN THE AUGUST 19-21 COUP TO THE PROCURATOR'S OFFICE. (COMMENT: POST NOTES THAT SEVERAL OTHER SUSPECTED COUP PLOTTERS HAVE BEEN RELIEVED OF THEIR IMMUNITY AFTER THEY REFUSED TO COOPERATE WITH SIMILAR INVESTIGATIONS; GIDASPOV CERTAINLY WOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT IF HE REFUSED TO COOPERATE, HE WOULD SHORTLY HAVE BEEN STRIPPED OF HIS IMMUNITY. END COMMENT.)

GIDASPOV INNOCENT BYSTANDER

17. GIDASPOV, ZOLOTAREV CLAIMED, HAD KNOWN NOTHING OF THE COUP BEFORE IT TOOK PLACE. FURTHERMORE, HE HAD NEVER ACTUALLY SUPPORTED IT; RATHER, HE HAD BEEN CAUGHT UP IN EVENTS AND BEEN UNABLE TO EXTRICATE HIMSELF FROM GUILT BY ASSOCIATION. ACCORDING TO ZOLOTAREV, GIDASPOV HAD AWOKEN AT 7:00 A.M. ON MONDAY, AUGUST 19, AND HEARD ON THE RADIO NEWS OF THE COUP. GIDASPOV HAD IMMEDIATELY GONE TO HIS OFFICE AND SPOKEN WITH COLONAL-GENERAL SAMSONOV, HEAD OF THE LENINGRAD MILITARY DISTRICT, WHO HAD BEEN NAMED AS HEAD OF LENINGRAD'S PUTATIVE "EXTRAORDINARY COMMITTEE." DURING THE CONVERSATION, GIDASPOV HAD LEARNED THAT HE, TOO, WAS A MEMBER OF THE "EXTRAORDINARY COMMITTEE" FOR LENINGRAD. GIDASPOV SERVED ON THIS COMMITTEE, ZOLOTAREV UNEQUIVOCALLY ASSERTED, IN HIS CAPACITY AS A MEMBER OF LENINGRAD'S MILITARY COMMITTEE AND NOT IN HIS CAPACITY AS FIRST SECRETARY OF THE OBLAST CPSU. GIDASPOV HAD ATTENDED TWO MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE ON AUGUST 19, INCLUDING ONE IN WHICH MAYOR SOBCHAK HAD ADDRESSED THE COMMITTEE. ZOLOTAREV BALDLY STATED THAT GIDASPOV HAD AT NO TIME SUCCEEDED IN DETERMINING EITHER WHO HAD CREATED THE COMMITTEE, WHO HAD NAMED ITS MEMBERS OR WHY HE HIMSELF HAD BEEN NAMED A MEMBER. (COMMENT: ZOLOTAREV NEVER EXPLAINED WHY, IF GIDASPOV HAD NOT SUPPORTED THE COUP AS CLAIMED, HE HAD NOT REFUSED TO SERVE ON THE COMMITTEE. END COMMENT.)

18. ZOLOTAREV REPORTED THAT GIDASPOV SPENT THE NEXT DAY OF THE COUP, AUGUST 20, "PREPARING FOR THE UPCOMING PARTY PLENUM, AT WHICH HE WAS SCHEDULED TO GIVE AN IMPORTANT REPORT." GIDASPOV, ZOLOTAREV ASSURED CONOFFS, HAD NEVER GONE TO MOSCOW (COMMENT: AS WAS WIDELY REPORTED IN THE SOVIET PRESS) BUT HAD REMAINED IN LENINGRAD. THE REPORTS OF GIDASPOV'S PHANTOM MOSCOW TRIP WERE "DISINFORMATION," ZOLOTAREV CLAIMED, AIMED AT "DISCREDITING" THE FIRST SECRETARY.

LOCAL COMMUNIST PARTY NEWSPAPER DEFECTS

19. ZOLOTAREV REPORTED MATTER-OF-FACTLY THAT THE "WORKING COLLECTIVE" OF LENINGRAD PRAVDA, THE PARTY'S PRIMARY NEWSPAPER IN THE CITY, HAD DETERMINED TO BECOME INDEPENDENT AND RENAME THE PAPER TO "SANKT PETERBURGSKIYE VEDOMOSTI". THE LOCAL PARTY HAD NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN THE DECISION, ZOLOTAREV SAID, AND HAD "NO COMMENT" ON THE PAPER'S CHANGE OF STATUS. HENCEFORTH, HE EXPLAINED, THE PARTY WOULD HAVE TO RELY ON ITS NEWSWEEKLY "RABOCHIY LENINGRAD" TO GET ITS VIEWS ACROSS TO THE PUBLIC. (COMMENT: ACCORDING TO CONSULATE'S PRESS CONTACTS, THE ENTIRE WORKERS' COLLECTIVE OF THE PAPER WAS SUBSEQUENTLY FIRED AND

THE PAPER IS NOW BEING RUN BY THE LENINGRAD CITY COUNCIL. END COMMENT)

PARTY UNREPENTANT, BUT CONFUSED

¶10. ZOLOTAREV THEN LAUNCHED INTO A RAMBLING, SOMEWHAT CONFUSED DISCOURSE ON THE CURRENT POSITION AND LIKELY FUTURE OF THE PARTY, DURING WHICH HE:

- COMPARED THE CURRENT STATE OF THE SOVIET UNION TO THE "TIME OF TROUBLES" (SMUTNOE VREMYA) DURING THE REIGN OF BORIS GODUNOV. THAT PERIOD OF CHAOS, ZOLOTAREV CONFIDENTLY ASSURED CONOFFS, HAD ENDED WITH AN "IRON FIST," AS WOULD THE CURRENT PERIOD OF CHAOS INEVITABLY END WITH A CRACKDOWN "WITHIN FIVE YEARS." INDEED, ZOLOTAREV REMARKED, THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TWO PERIODS WERE UNCANNY: "IN THE TIME OF TROUBLES, THE RUSSIAN CHURCH HAD BEEN PERSECUTED AND ROBBED. SO TOO, TODAY, THE PARTY -- WHICH IS, IN A SENSE, A CHURCH IN THAT IT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IDEOLOGY -- IS BEING PERSECUTED AND ROBBED OF ITS PROPERTY;"

- CLAIMED THAT, WHILE THE MEMBERSHIP OF LENINGRAD'S PARTY HAD FALLEN FROM 460,000 A YEAR AGO TO 300,000 CURRENTLY, THE FALL WAS ONLY TEMPORARY. ACCORDING TO "THE DIALECTIC," THE PARTY WOULD INEVITABLY RISE AGAIN. IT WAS ONLY "A MATTER OF TIME."

- ACCUSED SHEVARDNADZE, YAKOVLEV AND GORBACHEV OF BECOMING THE "LIQUIDATORS" OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY. THEY HAD LIQUIDATED THE PARTY IN THE PAST FEW YEARS BY STIFLING "ALL INTIATIVE." INDEED, THOUGH THERE WERE OVER 100 SUPREME SOVIET DEPUTIES FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY, THEY HAD BEEN "HELD BACK" BY THE LIQUIDATORS. AS A RESULT, THE COMMUNIST DEPUTIES HAD NOT INITIATED "A SINGLE DECREE OR NEW LAW" DURING THE PAST YEAR;

- PREDICTED THAT THE LENINGRAD CITY COUNCIL WOULD PROVE ITSELF USELESS AT ADMINISTERING THE CITY. "NORMALLY," ZOLOTAREV CLAIMED, THE CITY COUNCIL HELD A SPECIAL MEETING EVERY AUGUST 15 TO DISCUSS PREPARATIONS FOR THE COMING WINTER. THIS HAD NOT HAPPENED THIS YEAR AND IT REFLECTED THE CURRENT CITY LEADERSHIP'S POOR ORGANIZATION;

- COMPLAINED THAT THE ENTIRE LENINGRAD PARTY ORGANIZATION DID NOT HAVE A SINGLE TELEPHONE. THE PARTY HAD BEEN LOCKED OUT OF THEIR OFFICES AND THEIR OTHER PHONE LINES HAD BEEN CUT, ZOLOTAREV ADMITTED RUEFULLY. WE ARE LIVING, HE SAID, "UNDER THREAT" (POD UGROZOI).

COMMENT: YOU CAN'T TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS

¶11. APART FROM HIS WARNING ABOUT CITY PREPARATIONS FOR THE WINTER, ZOLOTAREV'S COMMENTS READ LIKE A PAGE OUT OF THE THEATER OF THE ABSURD. ONE CANNOT BUT SAVOR HIS CLAIMS THAT GIDASPOV HAD NO IDEA HOW HE CAME TO SERVE ON LENINGRAD'S "EXTRAORDINARY COMMITTEE." NOR ARE ZOLOTAREV'S BOAST THAT THE PARTY WOULD "RISE AGAIN" ACCORDING TO THE "DIALECTIC" OR HIS COMPARISON OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY TO ITS ERSTWHILE ENEMY AND VICTIM, THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, ANY LESS AMUSING FOR THEIR HISTORICAL IRONY.

¶12. BUT THE INTERVIEW HAS A MORE SERIOUS SIDE. ZOLOTAREV'S COMMENTS REFLECT THE INTELLECTUAL STERILITY AND STUBBORN REFUSAL TO ABANDON DISCREDITED IDEAS THAT CONTINUES TO CHARACTERIZE THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY. IT SEEMS THAT LENINGRAD'S COMMUNIST PARTY REMAINS UNREPENTANT AND EVER-READY TO LIE, CHEAT AND SOW CONFUSION -- EVEN AS

IT SLIDES INTO THE GRAVE.

GOSNELL